



*A nonpartisan research and public policy office of the
Connecticut General Assembly*

Testimony of

Julia Evans Starr, Executive Director
Connecticut Commission on Aging

Appropriations Committee
February 22, 2012

RE: CT Commission on Aging Budget in FY 12-13

Good afternoon Senator Harp, Representative Walker, Senator Kane, Representative Miner, esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Julie Evans Starr and I am the Executive Director of the CT Commission on Aging. Thank you for the opportunity to present today. I want to thank you for your support of the Commission on Aging over the past several years and ask for your continued support of this important agency. **Specifically, we respectfully request that you reconsider the Governor's proposed reduction of \$18,681 for the Commission on Aging. We are eager to work with the Legislative Management subcommittee of Appropriations to put forward a budget which allows us to best fulfill our mandate and represent our growing constituency.**

As you know, over two years ago PA 09-3 (and the governor's holdback reductions) cut the already lean CoA budget by 55%. Actually, all the legislative Commissions were cut by roughly the same percentage. In other words, we were ahead of the curve in our shared sacrifice. Responsibly and immediately, the CoA made the necessary adjustments to further streamline our operations and tackle our mandate with laser-like focus. Our best option given our limited resources was to significantly reduce salaries/staff schedules.

Still, in the face of these exceptionally challenging fiscal times we, at the Commission on Aging, have been unwavering in our dedication and innovation ~ we have remained a part of the solution! Through our work we analyze demographic trends, maximize state and federal funds, work across branches of state government, identify greater efficiencies within state government, lead cutting-edge research and promote national trends and best practices. These all add up to tangible, measurable results. In other words, we represent the very best of state government.

**CoA leads or actively
participates as a member
of the following
partnerships:**

Co-Chair - Money Follows the
Person Steering Committee,
Chair: Workforce
Development Subcommittee

Co-Chair and Manager
LTC Advisory Council:
CGS §17b-338

Medical Assistance Program
Oversight Council: CGS §17b-
28 and Complex Care
Committee

Chair & Manager, CEAN

Low Income Energy Advisory
Board: CGS §16a-41b

Public Health Preparedness
Advisory Council

And more...



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CoA is a Model for Results-Based Accountability: Through the wisdom of the CT General Assembly, PA 09-7 embedded Results-Based Accountability into the state statutes of the Commissions. We applaud this committee's data-driven decision-making utilizing RBA and look forward to continuing our collaboration with this committee and its RBA subcommittee. Through our ongoing collaboration, it becomes clear, that the CoA is tackling highly complex and multi-faceted aging-related issues ~ as it helps turn the curve. The selected data on a range of issues is compelling. It steers us to make smart policy decisions that prioritize the state's precious resources to improve the quality of life for its residents and ensure the overall health of the state budget. Through RBA, the CoA's performance reveals a low-cost, highly efficient and effective agency that delivers a sound investment in CT's future.

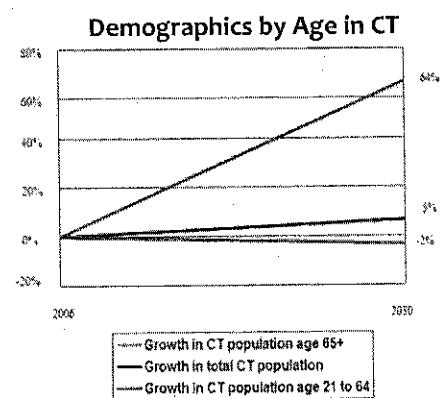
CoA's Budget in Perspective: To put CoA's budget into perspective, it represents .001% of the entire state budget. In relation to other Legislative Commissions, though sharing identical statutes, we are one of the smaller ones budgetarily. The CoA maximizes its limited funding as the majority of our funds go towards Personal Services for our professional staff of four (now budgeted for 2.9 FTE staff, including me). The CoA staff represents 4 (budgeted for 2.9 FTE) of the State's roughly 57,000 executive branch employees/600 legislative branch employees. We have reduced staff salaries/schedules from 20-50% over the past two years. Furthermore, our staff is participating in the recent concession package accepted by state employees.

The CoA budget is lean. Volunteer reimbursements, travel, printed materials, etc. are all long gone. Reducing it by another 6.6% as proposed by Governor Malloy could hinder us from fully meeting our mandate. We respectfully ask that you predicate your support for the CoA based on the caliber of our work as illustrated in our Results-Based Accountability reports – and on the magnitude of the issues affecting not just today's population of older adults, but tomorrow's as well. Furthermore, if you would need additional information I would gladly share with you a highly comprehensive Executive Director's Report that I submit each month to the board.

CoA Prepares CT for an Aging and Long- Lived Demographic:

The CoA brings dedicated focus and objective direction based in large part on demographic trends. Connecticut is the 7th oldest state in the nation. Demographics indicate that our population of older adults will explode in the next twenty years. From 2006 to 2030 our 65+ population will increase by 64%. The oldest of the baby boomer generation (those born between 1946-1964) have already begun turning 65 years of age. The whole of the boomer generation – almost 1 million strong in CT – will follow suit. Additionally, people are living longer. As our older population grows and experiences unprecedented longevity, it will impact nearly every facet of society and state government is no exception.

State Medicaid budgets and other safety net programs are strained at a time when the recession challenges the reliance on pensions and home equity. Proactively, the CoA works with the CGA, policymakers on all levels and diverse stakeholders to meet these challenges, prioritize funding and prepare for our state's graying future.



CoA Maximizes State and Federal Funds:

Undeniably, the CoA's vigilance has brought into the state millions of dollars. We continually analyze and identify opportunities to maximize state and federal funding. Over the past two years, in our work to explore and review the Affordable Care Act (national health care reform), we have vetted, recommended and in partnership pursued and implemented several initiatives that would and have generated enhanced revenues for our state.

CoA's expertise, vigilance and reach across branches of government has helped secure and maximize significant federal funds. These funds do not go into the CoA budget, but rather back into the State budget and will in part be used to transform and streamline CT's long-term care system.

Policymakers can't be expected to know about every federal funding opportunity or the distinct nuances of every aging-related issue, initiative or program – rather, we are that expert resource for you. We helped identify concrete ways the state can improve efficiency, save money, and actually help the constituency. Their report and subsequent legislation introduced by the GAE committee last year features many of the CoA's recommendations.

As a matter of fact any fundraising or expectation of fundraising to support the Commission's would be ill-advised – as up to 70% of dollars raised would go to the Comptroller's office for fringe benefits.

I would assert – during tough fiscal times – that revenue-generating entities and skillful problem-solvers should not be minimized through reduced funding or consolidation. Instead, perhaps they should be incentivized or rewarded - or at least funded adequately to maximize their effectiveness. In other words, if the further reduction is being proposed in an attempt to save money – it simply won't... quite to the contrary!

CoA Looks at the Big Picture and Works on Major Systemic Change: CoA devotes significant energy and provides critical leadership in the area of long-term care, which represents over \$2 billion, or 12%, of the state budget. Using research and recommendations from the state's Long-Term Care Plan and Needs Assessment, CoA has developed a series of policy proposals that would honor the U.S. Supreme Court Olmstead Decision, CT state law (CGS §17b-337), streamline state government, and potentially save Connecticut up to \$900 million each year. Additionally, these proposals increase choice in how and where people of all ages receive care, thereby enhancing their quality of life. We are so pleased to see that Governor Malloy has recommended many of these proposals in his budget, including our proposals about rightsizing/diversifying nursing homes, expand Money Follows the Person and workforce development.

The CoA utilizes multiple approaches to turn the curve on long-term care reform. Again this year we have updated a continued action plan and soon to be shared it with the members of the CGA and the Governor's office which provides specific recommendations to reform Connecticut's system. In addition to our policy proposals, we also continue to lead major collaborations as Co-chair of the Money Follows the Person Steering Committee (a \$100+ million federal demonstration program) and Co-Chair and manager of the legislatively mandated Long-Term Care Advisory Council. We fully informed countless high profile reports including CBIA's 21st Century Institute Report on Long-Term Care and the State Long-Term Care Plan. This week alone we have been called by a half a dozen reporters to help inform newspaper articles, etc. Our leadership represents rebalancing in action.

CoA develops workforce / Jobs. As chair of the MFP workforce development subcommittee, CoA presented a legislative forum on the direct care workforce last month. We have developed a 5-year strategic plan to address the needs of the workforce infrastructure. It is estimated that in the next five years the home and community based infrastructure will need an additional 9,000 jobs. As a

leader in statewide planning efforts, CoA will continue to work with state agencies, community partners, workforce investment boards and various other stakeholders to recruit, retain and train thousands of workers for careers in the home and community based care.

Another CoA initiative addresses the economic security of older adults, while also mitigating looming workforce shortages. Our "Redefining Retirement Years" initiative involved statewide focus groups and national research and resulted in a series of published reports. Our report on this issue resulted in policy options that could save the **state millions of dollars annually** by providing more flexible work opportunities for its workers. Ironically, it is through the Legislature's Volunteer Work Schedule Flexibility Program that the CoA staff is able to continue producing such quality work in light of significant budget reductions.

CoA is a Highly Efficient State Agency: To accomplish our work with maximum efficiency, we have always pursued creative means to achieve our results. In illustration, the CoA:

- shares resources with our neighbors at the Capitol (including supplies, copier, fax machine, space, etc.)
- has associations with the UConn School of Social Work and UConn Law School, and enlisted interns and research volunteers;
- has working relationships with a wide variety of stakeholders including: the providers, consumers, and the business community, from your districts and across the state; and
- benefits from our board members from across the state. (Here's a snapshot of a few of our members: The chief of geriatrics at St. Raphael Hospital in New Haven, several heads of municipal departments on elderly and senior centers, a retired business attorney/ an executive of major corporations)

In these difficult budget times, research-based initiatives, statewide planning efforts, vision, creative thinking and bottom-line results are all needed and delivered consistently by the Connecticut Commission on Aging. Our demonstrated leadership, broad reach, expertise and responsible financial management will serve the state well during the 2012 session and in the months and years ahead.

We thank you for this opportunity.